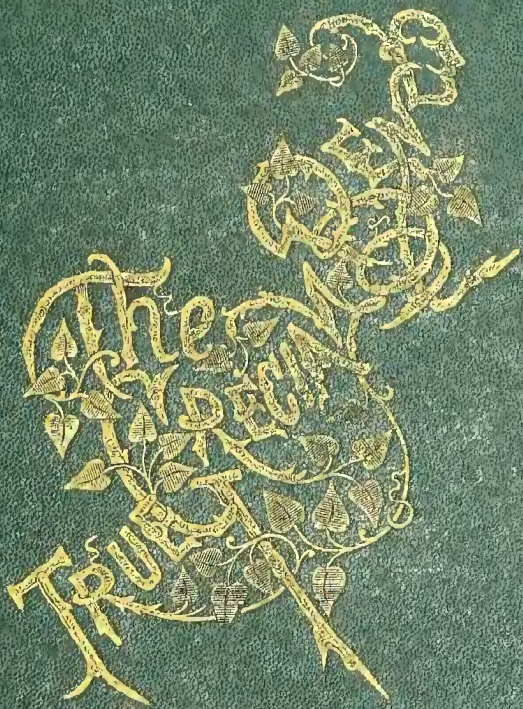




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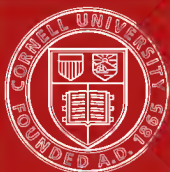
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THE
TRUE GRECIAN BEND
A
STORY IN VERSE

BY

LARRY LEIGH =
L. J. Warner.

"Whence and what art thou, execrable shape?"—MILTON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
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THE
TRUE GRECIAN BEND.

A WOMAN in France got the spinal
disease,
And from that sad moment she had no
more ease ;
To add to her anguish, she very soon
found,
Oh, horrors ! her back was becoming quite
round.

The spasms of physical pain she endured,
 Were keen, I assure you, and could not
 be cured ;
 But bad as these were, it seems, on the
 whole,
 They could not compare with the pangs
 of her soul.

For I must inform you, O dear reader
 mine—
 (I'm in my third verse, and indeed it is
 time)—
 That our stylish Parisian was Fashion's
 dear slave,
 And to its sweet service her brain and
 time gave.

If she had been poet or artist or
sage,
Or one of "the women," so called, "of
the age,"
With missions to Art, or the indigent
poor,
Her crooked vertébra she might well
endure.

For 'tis of no consequence, surely, I
say,
If strong-minded women who flaunt in
our day
Their rights to more freedom for work
and for speech
Are placed by disease quite beyond the
world's reach.

Such women belong to that low, common kind

Who assert that an active condition of mind

Or of hands (me! how vulgar!) does make, after all,

What we a true woman can worthily call.

But say, of what consequence, pray, can it be

If females with such vulgar notions, you see,

Are forced to stop work and all bold agitations

Of questions important to churches and nations

Because of a weakness of brain and of
spine?

(Both organs, alas! being in a *decline*.)

It matters but little, if women like
these,

Are deprived of all usefulness, comfort,
and ease.

But when a fair daughter of Fashion—
a treasure,

Who lives but to seek and to find her
own pleasure,

A victim becomes to keen pains that
do rack,

To pains that quite ruin the shape of
her back—

Here, here is a tale that makes the
heart bleed !

A tale wholly fit for a poet in-
deed !

Before I have finished, however, you'll
find

That sunlight with shadow is herein
combined.

At present the shadow rests over my
maid,

While wrapped in reflection she sits in
the shade.

Her brain being small, is quite like
the pot

Which, owing to smallness, so soon
became hot.

It seems at this moment, in truth, quite
 on fire,
 Harassed as it is with the spasms
 of ire,
 That seize it in thinking of hopes all
 destroyed,
 Her figure quite ruined! her future a
 void!

For I must inform you, our “char-
 mante Française,”
 Deluded as all of us were in those
 days,
 Considered it really a feminine
 charm,
 To carry the figure—including the
 arm—

According to Nature in some slight
degree,
With freedom and unstudied grace,
don't you see?
A form finely poised, and free in its
motion,
Is surely a sign—at least, such was the
notion—

Of youth and of health. Even some
thought that grace
Had a meaning and charm quite be-
yond a doll face.
But all such ideas have of course now
gone by
In times when the fashions do Nature
defy.

As I was just saying, our “charmante
Française,”

Deluded as all of us were in those
days,

Was tortured with agony now at the
thought

Of the change which the spinal affec-
tion had wrought

In her whose fine figure, a short time
ago,

Arrayed in rare furbelows; made such a
show

On the “Boulevards;” also when on
her white mare,

Erect and in “stove-pipe” she pranced
with the air

Which marks the great "parvenues"
out as that class

Whose eyes, looking over you, say,
"Let me pass !

Do you know who I am ? I've a carriage and four,

A poodle and twenty-five servants and more."

But I am digressing. The subject is great,

And I fear I shall never get through at this rate.

To return to "mes moutons," I mean to my maid ;

We left her, remember, in wrath and in shade.



She sat in the shade, for she feared
that the light

Would bring to her vision that horrible
sight,

A female with vertebral column
askew,

And now as she sat here she dreaded
the view.

But at the next moment a thought
bright as fire,

Seemed to burn in her eyes and to
chase away ire;

She rose, in a tremor of joy, from the
gloom,

And opening the shutters, made bright
the whole room.

She then all at once did proceed, with
a rush,
To fasten a pillow, with cheeks all a-
flush,
Just under her skirt, quite behind at
the back,
And then she donned quickly a hat and
a sack—

Seized quicker a parasol ; then without
fear,
She faced the long mirror with eyes all
a-cheer
With some inspiration, that strangely
did lend
To a spine badly bent an additional
bend.

Pray what was she doing ? you ask, all
amazed,
Perhaps you imagine the girl was quite
crazed,
Or trying a cure—and that's madness
enough—
With “*similia similibus*” ideas and
such stuff.

Oh, no ! my dear Reader ; she's simply
intent
On proving in practice the worth of a
bent,
Which entered her mind a few mo-
ments ago,
And set all her brain and her heart in
a glow.

In short, all creations of genius, you
know,
Originate, so they say, always just
so ;
Quite all of a sudden, undreamt of,
they're born
In the brain which seeks after to give
them a form.

The form which our heroine sought
now to give
To her noble creation was, sure as I
live,
A crook in the back and a crook in
the arm,
And with these same crooks she means
yet to charm

Her circle of former admirers and
 friends,
 And, after a ripe preparation, in-
 tends
 To make her "*début*" in a style very
 new,
 Unknown to the crowd or e'en the
 rare *few*.

Oh, view her, as now she continues to
 pass
 Up and down, while she studies herself
 in the glass !
 With parasol raised very high in the
 air,
 And spine really taking a curve, I
 declare,

Exceeding by far the long crook that
disease
Had wrought there in hours void of rest
and of ease,
And yet, I assure you, her face glows
with smiles,
While practicing poses the hours she
beguiles.

But while I still watched her, a cloud
thin as air,
Passed over the features that now
seemed so fair ;
With eyes on the mirror, I heard her
exclaim,
“ Oh ! dear me ! oh ! dear me ! I ’ve
lost it again.”

She takes a new bend—then cries,
 “That’s not it!”

Here, dear reader mine, she was seized
 with a fit
 Of abdominal colic, which only did
 serve
 To add, you perceive, to her back a
 new curve.

The full extra curve produced by the
 pain,
 Brought strangely the smiles to her
 features again ;
 She cried, “Oh! kind Providence surely
 did send
 This spasm to give me the ‘true Grecian
 bend!’

“The ‘true Grecian bend!’ here, here
 is a name
 Which soon will acquire a most glorious
 fame!
 It hides my poor hump altogether,
 you see,
 And a leader of fashion again I will
 be!”

Since the colic referred to, by Providence sent,
 dence sent,
 Two weeks had gone by, and our dam-
 sel had bent
 Whatever of strength she possessed to
 attain
 The “true Grecian bend,” and it was
 not in vain.

The day now arrived for the startling
“début,”
And our heroine smiling emerged to
the view
Of the Boulevards, where “tout le
monde” in a maze
At the strange apparatus in wonder did
gaze.

This strange apparatus, as I before
said,
Perched on heels that supported a
hump on the head,
A hump on the back and a crook in
the arm
Presented a vision entitled to
charm

The eyes of all artists; for sure't is
their duty

To recognize always the true curve of
beauty;

And who can deny that here was a
curve

Sufficiently curving as model to
serve?

The world, as I said, at first in
a maze,

With sneers at the strange apparatus
did gaze;

But when this same world at last did
discover

The "strange apparatus" was she, and
no other,

Who only last year the gay fashion did
 lead,
And lived on the Boulevard Malesherbes
 indeed !
They suddenly found that her present
 strange style
Was but a new fashion she'd set all the
 while.

Upon the discovery that, without
 doubt,
The humps and the crooks were "*the*
 latest out ;"
With common accord the dear feminine
 gender,
At once set to work in trying to
 render

Themselves in appearance as near as
could be,

To her who was now all the fashion,
you see.

So where only yesterday out on the
street

But one crooked female you might
chance to meet,

To-day there existed a hundred at
least,

Who made up a pantomime, truly a
feast

Of color and form, to him who de-
lights

In fine graceful contours and that sort
of sights;

And yet it is proper that I should
confess

(For to know "what is what" I did
never profess),

The sight of curved females at first
raised a question

Which seemed to me worthy some
solid reflection.

The question was this : if 'tis true as
averred,

Human origin may to the ape be re-
ferred,

Then we are now turning, I boldly
declare,

To monkeys again. Pray look at the
air

Of that monkey the organ-man carries
about.

Gaze but a short moment and you will
find out

When standing, his back just describes
the outline

Of that fashionable female, in garments
so fine.

Does not this resemblance, oh, tell me,
I pray,

'Twixt apes and the fashionable dames
of to-day,

Suggest to your mind the identical ques-
tion,

Which seemed to me worthy some solid
reflection?



I say, that it *seemed*, for I must explain,

On seeing the bend, I could not refrain

At first from scorn and dejection, but now

My feelings are altered entirely, I vow.

For when by the dashing “beau monde” I was told,

The bend was the *fashion*—I soon came to hold

Opinions quite different; believe me, to-day

It seems to me “stylish” and most distingué.”

And now I must tell you, last week at
a dance,
I found out the origin, quite by mere
chance,
Of the "bend" surnamed "Grecian,"
and then, think says I,
The fair sex shall know this; at once
I will try

To tell them in some way. So, spite
of delays,
I've written the story of the "char-
mante Française,"
And while I congratulate all my fair
friends
Who now are expert in the various
"bends,"

A word I would add—it is this : forget
not

How specially favored and blest is your
lot.

For you can have humps, if you like, on
the back,

Without the bad colic and pains that
did rack

The female whose spine the best doc-
tors couldn't mend,

But oh! she invented "the true Grecian
bend!"

A "bend" born of suffering truly pa-
thetic,

A "bend" scientific as well as æs-
thetic.

Now all of you know, I make bold to
infer,

The "colic" and "pains" did in Paris
occur.

Of course we Americans would not re-
ceive

Any fashions but those of imported
disease :

Excuse me : I mean that the "modes"
are imported,

For it is very true, as has oft been re-
ported,

We worship all things of Parisian ex-
traction ;

Why, even its morals (?) have quite an
attraction !

Of course, we despise them, but then,
do n't you see,

They come after all from the stylish
“ Paris ? ”

Oh ! wondrous Bill Shakspeare, of very
huge fame !

You lied, Sir, in saying all names were
the same.

But now before closing, I gladly extend

To all who desire to attain the true
bend,

A single suggestion, pray don't pass
it by,

But listen, then, labor “ and never say
die ! ”

In every Art-study you'll find it is
best,

To model from Nature with uniform
zest.

Oh, come now with me! I'll show you
to-night,

The model I spoke of—a pitiful
sight.

We'll leave the gay avenue—this is the
way—

Through byways and lanes where the
clear light of day

Has no room to enter. Here godless
despair

Finds vent in wild curses and cries—do
you dare

To utter reproaches? Come, come, do
not shrink;

You find the air stifling? Why, now
only think,

You're here but a moment and quite
lose your breath;

Yet many will dwell here from birth
unto death.

You cannot return, though chilling the
gloom,

For in this dark building we'll find a
dark room;

This stairway leads to it—come, let us
ascend;

I'll show you the model I spoke of, my
friend.

'Tis long after midnight ;—we reach
very soon,
Up by the dark stairway, the room
through the gloom ;
And here in the corner, where burns a
pale light,
Sits sewing and shivering a woman to-
night.

Through many a season, drooped low
o'er her knee,
She's sat there, and often she scarcely
could see
What stitches to take, so flickering her
lamp !
So weary her eyes ! so chilling the
damp !



Two little ones sleep at her side on the
floor;

At times she looks towards them with
heart very sore

At the thought of their cries at the last
scanty meal,

At the thought that on waking how
hungry they'll feel.

“ Oh ! what shall I give them ? the
crusts are quite dry,

Yet they're all that I have.” With
many a sigh

She turns to her work, for she knows
when 't is done

More bread can be bought with the
shilling she's won.

O brave, weary mother ! the morning
has come ;

You're hungry and cold, but the work
is not done.

Thus through the sad seasons she's bent
o'er her knee

So low that her back has a curve, do n't
you see—

A curve truly Grecian ! I'm sure you
would find,

Should you dress her in fashionable
clothes of the kind

Worn now, she'd look “stylish” and
have quite an “air.”

Her “bend” is more perfect by far, I
declare,

Than that of our ladies so fine and so
gay

Who walk in the avenues day after
day;

And surely an outline by Nature de-
signed,

Is much the best model, if you are in-
clined,

Fair lady, to triumph and truly in-
tend

To study as artist the "true Grecian
bend."

A model from Nature! now, here is
the question,

Is *this* Grecian bend really worth your
inspection?

There's only one drawback to this same
inspection,
The thought of which fills me with
some slight dejection,
I fear if this study you still will pursue,
It may not be best, friend, for me and
for you.

For listen ! There's possibly danger, you
know,
That you may become, in these
"models" who sew,
So much interested that you may
forget
Yourself and the fashions, and that
we'd regret.

Fair lady, oh ! guard against this above
all,

For what sadder lot could e'er you be-
fall ?

And what would become of the "beau-
monde " to-day,

Without "upper tens " and the fashions
so gay ?

It's time I should close ; my task 's at
an end ;

I've told you the tale of the "true
Grecian bend."

Besides, a good model I've now pointed
out,

By which you'll attain to perfection, no
doubt.

And now pray permit me, while saying
adieu,
With warmth once again to congratulate you,
That Providence kindly a colic did
send,
Which gave you, dear ladies, the “true
Grecian bend !”



